Top Ten Myths of Online Learning

Myth #1: On-line learning will totally replace classroom learning.
Reality: On-line learning will supplement, enhance, and make traditional learning more readily available to more people, but it will not do away with the traditional model.

Myth #2: On-line learning is a diluted education compared with classroom learning.
Reality: Rushed, crowded, classroom learning is diluted compared with communication, data-rich, self-paced, on-line learning. Both have good and bad points.

Myth #3: Committing to take on-line learning courses is risky because of many unknowns.
Reality: On the web, you should be able to take a test drive of a course and then decide whether or not to take it without ever spending in advance.

Myth #4: The social contact of the classroom is indispensable to learning; this belief usually comes from people that have never done any training on the web.
Reality: Strangers communicate on the web far more spontaneously and candidly than they do face to face, for people are inherently far more open on the web.

Myth #5: Managing groups of students on the web is extremely difficult because instructors can't see what their students are doing.
Reality: On-line learning is better and easier to manage than classroom learning because there is a real time track of what students are doing, how they are progressing, their test scores, how much time they are spending and their correspondence.

Myth #6: On-line learning is going to cut corporate training costs dramatically.
Reality: On-line learning is going to deliver better, faster, enterprise-wide performance improvement at the same budget, while freeing up money to spend on other things.

Myth #7: Course attendance fees make up most of the cost of classroom training.
Reality: Travel and accommodation can, and typically do, equal course fees; time away from the job, which is never factored in, can equal that as well.

Myth #8: Rich media and technology can replace good course design and instructor communication.
Reality: Although designers like to throw in fancy animation, the medium is neither the message nor the messenger. The quality of a learning experience cannot be judged by the liveliness of the graphics.

Myth #9: A closed Internet-based corporate university is the only way to manage on-line education.
Reality: Why confine rather than liberate? The Internet is a vast, on-line campus already, information and expertise are already out there.

Myth #10: On-line learning is an impersonal medium for students, who are sitting home or at the office.
Reality: One-on-one on-line learning is better than being a face in a crowded classroom. Students can talk directly to instructors and fellow students, while keeping track of what is going on.

http://www.the-vine.com/take/myths.htm

Myths About Education Technologies

- **Myth 01**
  Online students must do all their learning from content stored on a computer. This is true only in the relatively **rare** case of online courses that have no online synchronous classes in virtual classrooms, no electronic communications with a live instructor, no electronic communications with classmates, and no mentors or experts to contact for help and information. Experiments show that communications tend to increase when students take courses online.

  A major advantage of technology today is the ease and efficiency of linking students to experts and mentors.

- **Myth 02**
  Students on average will perform worse on examinations if they only have online courses as opposed to onsite traditional courses. There are so many variables and contextual factors that it is risky to make any claims on this one way or another. With online courses, much depends upon the quality of the technology hardware, the quality of the specially-designed online learning materials, and the maturity and motivation of the students. If the suitable materials are available and motivated students know what must be learned, there generally is no difference in examination performance. There is some evidence that online learning is more efficient in the sense that students learn faster and there is less time wasted in travel, setting up meetings with instructors or other students, and in searching hard copy documents that are not available on a computer.

The multi-million dollar, multi-year comparisons of online asynchronous pedagogy versus onsite traditional pedagogy tended to show that the online students than students in traditional classes and sometimes had higher grade distributions. See http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/255wp.htm and http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/assess.htm.

- **Myth 03**
  Students have deeper and more important communication in face-to-face encounters. There are advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face communications vis-à-vis electronic communications. Clearly there are advantages of face-to-face communications in learning social skills and in reading body language. There are obvious advantages when the learning is physical (e.g., learning to play team sports, learning how to diagnosis patients, etc.). Being able to read body language improves communications when students are weak in the language being spoken.

  But there are many disadvantages in face-to-face encounters. Some people are more shy, more easily intimidated, more bothered by physical defects. Electronic communications make follow-up messaging easier. So many times, students do not think of everything they would like to say at a given point in time. An hour later, they may think of something to add or something to retract. Electronic messaging may be strung out over days and are not limited to a particular meeting time. Electronic messages are more easily translated into other languages. Even when not translated, it is easier to deal with another language in text form than in audio form. For example, students who can read French often have no idea what is being said on the streets of Paris.

  The major advantage of electronic communications is the ease of sending off a message at any time to most anywhere in the world. Face-to-face encounters take more time to set up even if teleconferencing is of the highest quality.

- **Myth 04**
  Virtual classrooms are vastly inferior to live classrooms. Technologies for live audio and video virtual classrooms have vastly improved. The advantages of bringing students face-to-face from all over the world to conduct live (synchronous) classes are obvious. The worry is that the technology is unpredictable or that the learning is inferior to a traditional class meeting in a room. Schools such as Duke University, the University of Virginia, Notre Dame, Northwestern University, Columbia University, Stanford University, the London School of Economics, and hundreds of other top-rated universities are praising the technologies of virtual classrooms. For Example, the Global Executive MBA program at Duke University now has years of successful operations of virtual classrooms.

Universities Partner With Each Other

http://www.wired.com/news/business/0,1367,37220,00.html

The Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Michigan Business School, and the Darden School at the University of Virginia will offer each other's students classes specializing in e-business.

"So much of business education is the network-building between the students," said Haas Dean Laura Tyson. "What is nice here is that people in each location will now be able to have a new selection of classes to choose from, and a new selection of people to work with."

"In essence, this program is not only about sharing knowledge but about sharing communities,.

- **Myth 05**
  Only wealthy schools can set up virtual classrooms and conduct reliable distance education programs. Technologies for virtual classrooms and high quality asynchronous course delivery are exceedingly expensive, especially in terms of the cost of backup systems for the primary systems. These are sometimes too costly and too complicated even for the wealthy schools. Fortunately, there are relatively inexpensive alternatives available from external providers such as eCollege, Blackboard, and HorizonLive. For more details see http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/290wp/290wp.htm

- **Myth 06**
  The most important goals of technology in education should always be to make learning unambiguous, easier, faster, cheaper, and more fun. These are important goals and, in the 21st Century, technology advances (e.g., wireless communications, improved bandwidth, audio access, knowledge portals, ubiquitous computing, etc.) will take education and training to unbelievable heights. The problem is that we are also discovering more about human metacognition and the fact that deep learning and deep memory rely more upon discovering answers "on your own" with frustration, pain, anger, ambiguity, mistaken paths, making and correcting of mistakes, and serendipity. The fact of the matter is that students may be better off if instructors program in deliberate mistakes and fail to provide easy access to some learning content.

Bob Jensen's Working Paper 265 Concerns Giving Students the Full Benefits of Newer Technologies May Be Hazardous to Their Long Run Memory and Accomplishments.

Source: Metacognitive Concerns in Designs and Evaluations of Computer Aided Education and Training:
Are We Misleading Ourselves About Measures of Success? by Bob Jensen at http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/265wp.htm

- Multimedia and Other Technologies Can Give Students What They Want by Making Learning More of the Following:

    1. **Easy** (e.g., interactive graphics, interactive databases, ease of search, ease of access, ease of finding help, ease of navigation, etc.)
    2. **Fun** (animations, videos, audio, etc.)
    3. **Inspirational** (cream-of-the-crop instructors, access to experts and motivators)
    4. Realistic (networked simulations and virtual reality)
    5. **Collaborative** (ease of communication and collaborative software)
    6. **Efficient** (learn from any location at any time at less cost with personalized knowledge bases and portals)

- What Students Want is Not Necessarily What They Need

    1. Humans retain more when something is **hard** to learn.
    2. Humans retain more when something is **painful** to learn and that part of the retention of what is learned is the struggle in finding the answers.
    3. Students retain more when they reason and discover something **on their own**.
    4. Leaning from **mistakes** may be the best teacher.
    5. Humans are prone to **information overload**.
    6. The **pace of life** and learning may indeed be a killer.

- **Myth 07**
  Knowledge portals of the future will be so fantastic that there will be little need for courses, instructors, or student interactions. Knowledge portals such as Fathom at Columbia University will become bigger and better to a point where they will be described as panaceas to ignorance at all levels of knowledge. But they will not likely be true panaceas to deep learning and deep memory. Ironically, educators of the future may be needed to create ambiguity, difficulty, pain, and frustration to overcome the simplicity of knowledge portals. Also there will be so much knowledge in the world's knowledge bases that educators will be desperately needed to put together curricula "cruises" that can be managed by students in a sea of knowledge. See my threads on knowledge portals at http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/000aaa/portals.htm.

- **Myth 08**
  A major advantage of education technologies is that they make life easier for instructors. Nothing can be further from the truth than the myth that instructional technologies make it easier to teach a course. In fact, the major drawback is that use of technologies causes instructor burn out even among instructors who are proficient in the use of these technologies. One of the burn out factors is the increased burden of dealing with heavy electronic communications from students and the monitoring of student communications in electronic chat rooms. Another drawback is that learning materials should be designed specifically for an online pedagogy. Old lecture materials cannot simply be pasted into a web server with the expectation that students will get as much from reading them as they did from listening to the lectures. Lecture materials must be redesigned into hypertext and hypermedia format with gaps filled in where the lecturer tends to ad lib or interact live with students in class. Messages from "daring professors" on their frustrations with educational technologies can be found at http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/ideasmes.htm.

- **Myth 09**
  For a variety of reasons (notably convenience of course access and/or timing), there will be less student attrition in online courses than onsite courses.
  It is very common for a higher proportion on online students to not complete distance education courses. Many reasons are confounded in this phenomenon. One of the major reasons is that online students are often part-time students who are not able to take an onsite course because of job and/or family commitments (e.g., a parent who must be home caring for children or a person with an unpredictable work schedule that may entail frequent travel.). Such students sign up for the online course with great optimism for how much time can be devoted to the online course and later discover that they were overly optimistic. Another reason is the "try out" phenomenon. Since online courses are sometimes easier to "try out" with fewer logistical problems of getting to an onsite class, there is a tendency for students to enroll for a trial period and then drop if their grades are lower than expected before the deadline for dropping a course.

- **Some Other Myths**

147 PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TEACHING ONLINE GROUPS: ESSENTIALS OF WEB-BASED EDUCATION, by Donald E. Hanna, Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, and Simone Conceicao-Runlee [Overland Park, KS: Atwood Publishing, 2000, ISBN: 189185934X]	
Myths of Online Teaching and Learning	
43.	Myth: Learners are unable to adapt to the online environment
44.	Myth: The instructor has to know how to do everything
45.	Myth: Time requirements for teachers are lower in an online environment
46.	Myth: Online classrooms aren't conducive to group interaction and activities • Learner-Teacher • Learner-Learner • Learner-Guest Expert • Learner-Student (e.g., where the learner is practice teaching) • Learner-Interviewee (e.g., where student plays the role of an interviewer)
47.	Myth: Online classrooms aren't as social as face-to-face classrooms
48.	Myth: The number of learners in online classrooms can be unlimited
49	Myth: Technology will always work
50.	Myth: The course will market itself; post it on the web and they will come
51.	Myth: Learners will always understand your intended expectations for them from your clearly written syllabus

http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/000aaa/thetools.htm